# Notes from Face to Face
# Albuquerque, 4/17/01

The meeting began with a discussion of the recent changes in NPIRS management. They include: Ray Fisher has resigned. Notah Begay has been assigned to other responsibilities. Rus Pittman will assume responsibilities as interim Director of NPIRS.

## Access to NPIRS Database

Access to NPIRS Production Database: As requested earlier, the NPIRS database had been frozen (with halted processing of registration data), but, in order for the Team to do IV&V on the copied database, both the NPIRS and the copied databases had to be unfrozen. When the NPIRS database was unfrozen, some interim processing was done which changed it. Rus advised that the DQA Team can have access to the NPIRS database and that he can authorize the freezing of the database for brief periods, in coordination with other NPIRS tasks, so that we will be able to perform our analyses.

Replicated/copied database: An auto replication needs to resolve the issue of differing fieldname lengths. We can use the IBM or DB2 consultant to help resolve the issue and establish a true replication. We will hold on the auto replication effort until the IBM team is here.

Restorable Backup: Joe Herrera will go ahead with the restoration from a backup to make sure it works. (4/19/01: Joe reports successful restoration of a backup on a different server box.)

Impact of queries on the NPIRS database load: team members will call Karen or Stephanie to ask about the impact before running any query that has an unknown impact and to find out what production processes are being done. It was suggested that NPIRS begin to post on their website their daily schedule of scheduled processing so people know when they can run their queries.

Policy/Procedures for Granting Access: We need to establish policy (who sees what) and procedure (technical methods to control which reports they can see (Crystal) or control access at the table level or by type of data). Debra will work with Edna Paisano and Phil Smith to determine who sets policy (for all user groups) and to determine strategy for getting it set. This should focus for now on expected users, internal people, with the needs of external people to be addressed at a later time.

Contract(s) Assessment Scope: We also need to identify, collect, and prepare the documentation we believe the IBM team will require to get started. IBM: we need to prepare for this contract startup pre-work meeting with assembly of existing documentation, clarity of our requirements, and initial documentation of known difficulties. SAS technical assistance will be engaged via the existing IHS Enterprise License. (See Clarification document for preliminary understanding of compatibility between these two contractual efforts.)

SAS Upgrade: The SAS new version arrived Friday but there were problems with the install – will try again this week. (On SAS client side, there were problems installing it on DB2 8.0 but not on 8.2.) Karen will produce documentation on using SAS to assess DB2 data.

DB2 Connect: Karen and Stephanie will work out difficulties on SAS/DB2 and availability of DB2 Tools (it is also possible to download other formats using DB2 Tools). We hope to have DB2 connect up and running within a week. Folks can export data to their PC and run it from there; that is, they can designate a time range or range of ICD9 codes to download a smaller data file and manipulate it locally. SAS also handles SQL queries.

Logging Changes to NPIRS Production Database: This log, maintained by NPIRS staff, should contain historical entries; it should be in a spreadsheet, and entries to it should be as automated as possible to reduce both manual error and documentation burdens on NPIRS staff.

Data Modeling of NPIRS Database: In response to a request to data model NIRS database structure, we decided to wait until we get some preliminary information from the IBM team. We expect IBM may say we need to make immediate changes to the database structure. We'll re-assess the need for data modeling at a later time when we know more clearly the details of any immediate changes.

Direction of Data Handling: We believe we are moving to a system whose data collection is based on its use – data collected will depend on, for instance, what GPRA needs, or ORYX needs, etc. Tribes will be able to decide if they want to participate in individual need-based data collection and will be able to turn (collection and export) switches on and off. The reporting component (Data Mart support) will then develop programs to produce reports that meet those needs.

## Coordination

Timeline of Activities: We need to lay out a timeframe of what we are going to do and when (e.g., header changes, etc.). This will guide us interfacing with other workgroups and teams.

Coordination with ASDS on RPMS: 1) We need a technical RPMS consultant/liaison with whom to work out software modifications. 2) According to Rus, we are authorized to deploy the version/patch site audit software, an issue which has previously been unresolved. 3) We need to make sure we are compatible with required Medicare/aid upgrades -- (ASDS Business Office Team?).

Workgroup Coordination: The Data Requirements Wkgrp (probably Mike Gomez lead) is looking at program data needs, an effort that will most likely result in required changes to the data exports. The Data Transport Wkgrp is testing and deploying a new data movement method (Cloverleaf Interface Engine). The lead of this workgroup (Jim McCain) has indicated that they will wait on making modifications to RPMS exports (e.g., GIS/HL7) until we know what changes we want made as well. We anticipate implementing a process in which exports will be driven by data reporting needs and that changes to both will be periodic and 'proceduralized'. That is, a date (e.g., semi-annual) will be set by which programs must submit changes they need made to the data exports to meet their changing reporting requirements. This change makes modifications to the exports an ongoing, report-driven process, more responsive to changes in regulations and can be more clearly negotiated with Tribes.

Stat Officer Workgroups: Patricia will distribute a spreadsheet of everyone in these workgroups by area. Patricia and Edna will explore what might be done to encourage more participation on these workgroups.

## Documentation

Capture Knowledge from Experience: It is important that the documentation effort capture and document the knowledge of issues that the NPIRS staff can contribute from their practical experience. Incorporating an "Issues/Limitations" section in each document, where appropriate, is a start in this direction.

Range of Documentation: Because of differences among the exports, we believe we are not catching all the data; perhaps the manner in which data is handled upon receipt NPIRS contributes to this issue. Our documentation effort must address the export programs (what data is being exported and in what program), where data is converted, and how data is handled upon receipt (PCC and Dental visits, for instance, and what's in what export and what's not counted).

Data Management: Our organization my ultimately need a person whose perspective is the high level integration of NPIRS, program data, and exports, and who can recommend policy and effectively interact with each component of the problem to negotiate decisions. This person must understand the issues enough to effectively speak to them and to all parties about them. One responsibility of this person might be to periodically recruit focused action teams to research, resolve, and document issues

## User Pops

Frequency of User Pops: User pops needs to be seen as a routine report, not delayed by workload verification. Workload reporting and user pops can be done on a periodic basis (e.g., every 2 weeks) and should be footnoted with what's right and wrong, which issues are resolved and unresolved, etc., when published. Our present strategy is to fix the most critical workload problems, then start to run the user pops frequently for internal review and validation.

Clarity of Content: The report doesn't currently include information that stat officers need to understand what the data represents. We're going to provide a front end interface to the data for them to verify it themselves. We will work with the stat officers on the format and content of the workload report and include an error report to indicate the actual report contents. We want to give people a drilldown capability to see what's included and excluded from the reports.

Workload Reporting: We need to clarify who the decision-makers are for the workload reporting criteria and verification. Perhaps this information can come from the Workload Reporting Workgroup. Currently there is no defined process for how workload verification is to be conducted; we know there are some duplicates and believe there are some issues everyone is having in common with the verification process. Eventually, we want propose a process, make the process public for everyone to comment on/revise, then use the agreed upon process which should reduce issues to quality of the actual data. We can periodically change the process as requested by the users.

Site Review of Error Reports: Sites export and check the data (workload report and its associated error report); a process that represents a demand on resources at the site. This data review supports determining needed improvements to the provision of health care and to data entry. To help the sites do this data review and do it efficiently, we could determine benchmarks, or threshold percentages, that commonly indicate problems that should be reviewed at the local level. This threshold, when reached, could launch an automatic notification to the site as well as to the Area. ORYX has a process (although not the logic yet) that makes data reporting visible and may be used to implement such a solution. (Karen C will get with Mike Gomez to work this out.)

Registration Data: While attempting to resolve outstanding issues with the Phoenix and Billings re-exported data (e.g., decrease in counts because of duplicates in former exports, location of original Phoenix data), our Team focus is to identify the cause of problems, make the necessary corrections, and move forward with corrected processing. Decision: We will continue to prepare for and implement the re-export of registration data but we will not hold up user pops for it. We can look at registration data for one or more areas to get a sense of the change to expect from year to year and that should be enough to see what the numbers should be. This may be how we come up with new numbers for past couple of years (99-00). We will openly publish this process and clarify that, to get absolutely accurate numbers, we'll need to complete the re-export of the registration data.

Sequence of Team Action: Over the next 2-3 weeks, we will process our data to make it more current, then, within another 2 weeks, we will produce an internal, test user pop report. We will make no changes now to workload data in order to produce the test run of user pops data; this will enable us to make comparisons without other factors affecting the counts and will provide us with documentation on the areas we need to address. The user pop logic is being documented now and will be reviewed (Linda, Patricia).

At the same time, we will work on workload and re-export of registration data. Draft procedures are in place for the RPMS re-export, but not for non-RPMS re-export. Headquarters/Patricia Osborne will coordinate the re-export process with non-RPMS sites. Our target timing is to complete the re-export within a 3-month period. Gary Hartz will need to send a request to sites strongly encouraging them to participate in the re-export process.

Steps to User Pop Test Report in 60 Days: Here are the steps we'll take as a group to produce the best possible user pops report (97/98) (workload reportable/not reportable) we can within 60 days for internal review and validation:

1. Complete User Pop Logic documentation.
2. Get the routines in place to run.
3. Produce a line item report of what's been included/excluded in the user pop.

4. Include a summary by area of workload reportable/non-reportable and error trapping of what's included/not included
5. Run user pops and find the differences using Automatch.

Workload reports can now be published for review by all stat officers because they're in good shape. However, we will not officially publish user pops until we can produce a version that is satisfactory enough to be useful .

## Project Plan

High level task areas were given team member owners with whom Joan can work to flesh out further detail; establish anticipated startup, durations, and dependencies; and further develop the existing project task list into a working project plan.